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ABSTRACT

The prevailing concept today is that the student activity program is a vital part of the total school curriculum. In order to present a study of factual material and opinions regarding the general status of the student activity programs in Wisconsin, a questionnaire was sent to the administrators of the 501 public and private senior high schools in the State. Questionnaires from 87 percent of those surveyed were analyzed. Some of the major recommendations include student representation in the program evaluation process; participation of students in activity programs on a voluntary basis, with participation never being prohibited as either a discriminating or a punitive device; teachers class loads to include student activity assignments; and no participation together of girls and boys in interscholastic sports. (MLF)

Current Status of the Student Activity Programs in Wisconsin Public and Private Senior High Schools

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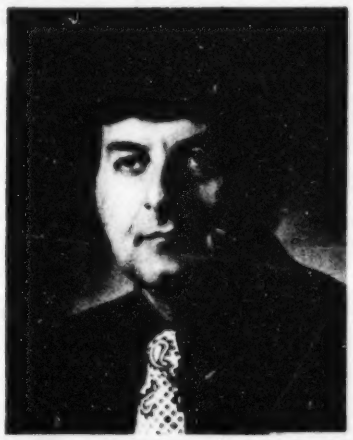
EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO DR. KLEIN ARE IN FACT "INTRA" ACTIVITIES, AS THEY ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF MOST SCHOOL PROGRAMS. STUDENT ACTIVITY PROGRAMS HAVE BECOME STAGNANT AND NEED REVITALIZATION, ORGANIZATION, AND GOAL ORIENTATION AND DIRECTION. DR. KLEIN OFFERS MANY EXCELLENT SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF STUDENT ACTIVITY PROGRAMS, MANY OF WHICH ARE THE DIRECT RESULT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS. THIS IS AN INTERESTING, WELL WRITTEN ARTICLE WITH MANY FINE IDEAS.



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The demands of high school students for a "more relevant education" have dramatically changed the secondary school curriculum. The prevailing concept today is that the student activity program is a vital part of the total school curriculum. However, as one reviews the materials published on the subject, there seems to be little evidence that the student activity programs have kept pace with the academic offerings. Further research revealed that there had been no statewide study of student activity programs conducted in Wisconsin.

The purpose of this research, then, was to study and analyze the present status of student activity programs in the public and private senior high schools in the state of Wisconsin and to provide information regarding these programs and practices.

This information, hopefully, will aid in giving insight, direction and guidance so that a more effective program of student activities may be envisioned and implemented in the 70's.

It was decided that, in order to present a study of factual material and opinions regarding the general status of the student activity programs, the study should include all of the 501 public and private senior high schools in the state of Wisconsin. As it was felt that the nature of the activity program would vary according to the size and type of school, the schools were first divided into their two natural divisions: public and private. Secondly, the public schools were classified by size (large, medium, and small) and the private schools according to type of school (co-ed, boys', and girls'). It was decided not to have a comparative study between the public and private schools but rather to study them independently of each other.

The basic procedure used in this research was the survey method with which the study itself was carried out by means of a questionnaire.

The survey instrument (questionnaire) was sent to the administrators of the 501 public and private senior high schools in Wisconsin. With the aid of a follow-up letter, 451 schools returned the questionnaire from which 438 were used, representing an overall 87 per cent of the 501 schools.

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The data obtained, by questionnaire, was processed by the Marquette Computor Services, using an IBM 7040 Digital Computor. Two programs were utilized to generate the output, the SRG (Survey Report Generator) and SAP (Survey Analysis Program).

Results

The following are some of the major conclusions drawn after a careful analysis of the data as it related to the questions for this study:

1. Despite the fact that the vagueness of the real meaning of "extra - curricular" activities has been the cause of confusion and dispute, it is the term most often used to describe the schools' activity programs in Wisconsin.
2. The principal is the person who most often is responsible for directing the student activity program. Despite the fact that the literature suggests a need for an activities director, neither the public nor private schools indicate a strong desire to move in that direction. However, in the large public schools, 51 per cent did indicate a desire for a director of student activities.
3. The operation of a student activity program in a school involves the management of significantly large amounts of money. The current financial situation facing many schools across the nation is causing a re - evaluation of various phases of the school program. The student activity program is no exception. To some extent, the activity programs are self - supporting. Public schools obviously have an opportunity to use general funds if they desire. However, there is little evidence indicating tendencies of boards of education to assume responsibility for the total financial support of the program. There is also a need to have financial policies established by the local school boards.
4. The schools expressed a desire to form a state activity association. It is not clear as to whether or not it should include both athletic and non - athletic activities. The public schools (60 per cent) were opposed and the private schools (80 per cent) were in favor of one association for all schools. A federation of existing athletic, music, and speech/forensics organizations was recommended to have the primary responsibility for a state activity association. It was made quite clear that the schools would not favor the Wisconsin Secondary Schools Administrators Association for the controlling agent.
5. There is agreement among school principals concerning the objectives that are attainable through an activity program. The two prominent objectives were judged to be: developing personality and character and developing a feeling of belonging. However, most schools have made little effort to develop specific objectives for their activity programs.
6. The majority of secondary school administrators indicate in their responses their awareness of the need for evaluation and appear to be making at least superficial evaluations. There is a definite need to include students in the evaluation process. The private schools have included students more frequently than public schools in their evaluation process. There is a need to evaluate the activity advisors, as less than 50 per cent of the schools use any evaluation methods. When evaluation methods are used, they are generally subjective.
7. It would seem generally desirable that the participation of students in activity programs be on a voluntary basis and any limitations should be strictly on an individual basis. It was found that there are still various restrictions used to control student participation in the activity program. Behavior problems and the failure to maintain a minimum grade point are the two most frequently mentioned factors that prevent students from participating.
8. The Wisconsin Association of Student Councils has a definite membership problem. Less than half of all the state high schools are members. The failure to agree with the philosophy of the association and the high cost of membership dues were the most frequently mentioned reasons for non - membership. Schools generally would prefer that the WASC become a subgroup of the Wisconsin Secondary Schools Administrators Association with the understanding that it be reorganized to better meet the needs of all the schools.
9. Control of crowds, while seen as a concern by a majority of schools, is not a major concern at this time.
10. There is a trend toward electing a student to represent the student body at school board meetings.
11. There is a trend toward optional attendance at both pep and regular school assemblies.
12. Administrators see lack of faculty commitment and lack of student interest, along with lack of student time due to open campus, early graduation, early release and others, as factors that are most likely to reduce the effectiveness of student activity programs in the future.
13. A majority of secondary school administrators, in both public and private schools, are opposed to the concept of girls and boys participating together in interscholastic sports.
14. Some type of activity program is sponsored by every high school surveyed in this

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study. It appears, therefore, that an activity program is very much an integral part of the total educational program of the secondary schools. The variety of activities offered in the schools appear sufficient to provide opportunities for students to develop almost any skill or talent which they might possess. Such activities as basketball, baseball, football, yearbook, newspaper, band and drama are found in almost every high school. Girls' athletics is the one recent significant addition to the acitivity program. There does appear to be a sifting effect whereby some traditional activities are being dropped and, in a few cases, new innovative activities are being added. However, as one studies the individual program from each school, one thing becomes very clear: there have been few reported innovations. The stagnant state of student activities may have a bearing on the lack of student and staff interest that is concerning school administrators.

As the findings presented in this report are studied by those responsible for administering the student activity program, it is hoped that the efforts of this investigation will have provided useful information and normative data to those institutions responsible for providing educational experiences through the student activity program. This study may serve as something of a watershed as much of what has been written previously and found through research in this study appears to apply to an era when student needs and expectations were far different than they are today.

Education, however, must concern itself, in the remnants of the 20th century, with these changes which will enable us to keep up with the times. One of the most important goals must be the development of the whole person; and in this development, the student activity program must play a most important role.

In general, therefore, the following recommendations may serve as a guide to both the practioners and professional people, and, if implemented, might significantly improve the activity programs in all our Wisconsin high schools.

1. A state high school activities association should be organized under a federation of the existing activity organizations to bring all Wisconsin secondary school activities under one regulatory organization. Appropriate legislation should be asked for in order to give full legal recognition.
2. The student activity program should be conducted as a legitimate part of the total curriculum and be recognized for its relative importance in each school in relation to the curriculum, community and, most important, the student.
3. Although the term "extra - curricular" was used most frequently, it should be eliminated in favor of "student activities," because activities are an important part of the total program, not "extra" or relatively unimportant.
4. Each school would do well to develop, with administrators, faculty, and students, a set of written objectives and advisor handbooks for all their activities, using as references, the goals and broad aims recommended by the Wisconsin Task Force on Educational Goals and the Evaluation Criteria of the North Central Association for student activities.
5. Because of the lack of apparent direction in many schools and the need for a humanization of all our programs, it is recommended that a person be appointed with sufficient time to organize and administer the total activity program. In the larger schools, this may be a full time director of activities who should have no additional tasks such as discipline and attendance.
6. A job analysis of the duties and responsibilities of those who advise student activities should be made and a means should be designed so as to evaluate their performances in other than subjective ways.
7. The new management tool of PPBS (planning, programming, budgeting system) should be applied to aid in the decision - making process regarding all phases of the program, especially to determine whether or not there is a need to continue all or certain phases of the program.
8. The teacher's class load should be considered to include not only academic classes but also student activity assignments. Every effort should be made to equalize the total load of all teachers and compensation in the form of pay or released time should be considered for advisors of all activities requiring time beyond the regular school day.
9. To develop true learning experiences, students must be involved in the total process of the student activity program. For example, within guidelines, they should be asked to help develop and evaluate the goals and objectives of the total and individual activities, to help prepare budgets to be presented to the advisors and administrators for each program, and to participate in the follow - up studies when called to do so.
10. Each school should have a positive program to promote and control participation geared to the individual student's needs. Participation should never be prohibited as either a discriminating or a punitive device. Encouragement should be given and an "open door policy" maintained so that ALL students can profit from participation in the activities.

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Each school should include boards of education, administrators, faculty, and students in determining policies and procedures related to the financing of the student activity program. If the concept is accepted that student activities are worthwhile and a part of the total educational program, then it follows that the financing of some activities must be taken from the general fund. This is especially important if we are to prevent inequalities of programs between the so-called "haves" and the "have-nots."

The Wisconsin Secondary Schools Administators Association should take an active role in sponsoring and revising the Wisconsin Association of Student Councils. It is imperative that a new philosophy be developed so that it better meets the needs of the present high schools

It is recommended that the colleges and universities study the possibility of offering both undergraduate and graduate work in the area of student activities. ●●●